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The Last Days of His Most Serene Holiness

SREEMATH SWAMI

NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ.

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NAMO BHAGAVATHE
RAMAKRISHNAYA.

The last days of His most serene Holiness
SREEMATH SWAMI
NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ
at the S. R. K. Niranjana Ashrama,
Ottapalam.

A few days before his Mahasamadhi the Swamiji entertained the idea of filling up a portion of the big Ashrama well and making it a smaller one. The work was nearing completion when on the morning of the 17th of April 1938 some stones from the embankment which was being built up inside the well and some earth from the filled up portion slipped and fell into the reduced well. Two of the Sannyasins disciples of the Swamiji got down into the well to remove the debris and worked till 12—noon. Again in the afternoon they got down to complete the removal. A servant of the Ashrama—a young man—also joined

them. Being the first to get down, he was at the bottom. While all of them were engaged at work there was another slip. It was so sudden and big that they could not move out of its way. The debris buried the servant completely and one of the Sanyasins up to his chest. The accident was reported to the Swamiji. He hastened to the spot and seeing what had happened cried out "O! Gurumaharaj, what is this! Why has this happened!" Referring to the servant he exclaimed O! my child! my child! and he proceeded forthwith to descend the ladder to rescue the victims. The Sanyasins inside the well had by that time noticed dangerous cracks in the new embankment. Fearing further mishap and also considering Sri Swamiji's health and age they implored him again and again not to get down. Other disciples and workmen present also prevented him from making that bold venture and they immediately got down. With great difficulty they extricated the Sanyasin standing

buried up to the chest. Fortunately he had sustained only very slight injuries. The rescue of the poor servant was out of the question. It was not till 3 p. m. the next day that his body could be exhumed.

The mishap was naturally felt by Sri Swamiji as a very severe shock. His heart went out to the victim of the accident. Remaining in the portico close to the well he kept awake the whole night repeating the name of the Lord. He did not even take his usual food. The next day (18th of April) at about 11 a. m. he went to the Bharatha river for his bath. Since his last illness at Calcutta in 1935, he was having only hot-water bath. This day, however, his heart would not suffer the inmates of the Ashrama being put to the trouble of carrying water for his bath from a distant well. So he walked to the river and took a plunge-bath in cold water. Towards the evening he got temparature.

The next morning (19th of April) he

took some quinine pills he had with him; but the temperature did not fall. Yet he continued his activities as usual, directing and supervising various works. For the funeral expenses of the servant, Swamiji himself had paid handsomely the previous day. He further wanted to give a decent amount to the parents of the deceased. He called one of the Sanyasin disciples and entrusted him with a roll of currency notes to be given to the bereaved mother with instructions as to how she should invest the amount.

Not yet feeling well, he took a purgative on the morning of the 20th. But the bowels did not move. So at about 4 p. m. a doctor was called. He examined Swamiji, gave an enema and thought that the temperature could be brought down by a quinine injection. But that injection being a muscular one, he was doubting within himself if he should inflict that pain and whether Swamiji could stand it in his then

condition. Reading his thoughts, Swamiji said "Don't feel nervous, doctor, you may do what you like with this body; it is not mine." The injection was therefore given.

The next day (21st of April) temperature fell from 103° to 99.5° ; but the upper arm where the injection was given became a little swollen. It was also giving pain. Then another doctor, an M. B., B. S., who was known to the Swamiji, was called. He prescribed certain medicines for external application also. Addressing him Swamiji said "Doctor I have some very costly lint and medicine with me. You take them and use them for poor patients, not for the paying ones." They were collected and properly packed and set apart to be given to the doctor. The treatment continued but neither the pain nor the swelling abated. Swamiji however continued giving instructions regarding the construction of the guest house, the sinking of a new well and other Ashrama works.

On the 23rd, slight swelling appeared in Swamiji's feet also. Referring to it, the Swamiji remarked to one of his household disciples, who was standing by "you see the children are looking intently at my swollen feet. That swelling is not like this (pointing to his arm). It is something quite different. To the little girls who were always near him, whom he had actually worshipped as forms of the Mother herself and to whom he was a mother, father, friend and playmate, guide and teacher, he taught some new songs, himself singing them very sweetly. He played with them, laughed with them and playfully showed them how to cry. "Who will give you mangoes nicely cut when I am gone", he is said to have asked them on that day. Poor children! they did not in the least comprehend the import of those words. To the Sanyasin disciples attending on him he said". "Don't give me any more medicine. Later on he said "I don't want any thing from tomorrow forward".

He added ‘,Let me lie down peacefully’. In spite of these significant words the disciples did not, in their excess of love for Sri Swamiji, believe that the great end was so imminent.

His bodily condition was no better on the 24th. Growing anxious, the disciples wired to Dr. Thampi of Trivandrum that after-noon (Sunday). More than once Swamiji enquired if a book post had come to his address. It would appear that it was the Bengali almanac for the new year that he was expecting. Not getting it he referred to the old one and also to the new Malayalam one. That night he was heard to say “Some one will have to go back tomorrow”. It was the next day that His Holiness Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj attained Mahasamadhi. He was also constantly calling on the mother “Ma, Ma, Oh Ma”.

Later on he was also heard to say

“Yes, Trivandrum work is finished”. It may here he mentioned that Swamiji had regarded Trivandrum work as a charge entrusted to him by Sri Sri Maharaj (Swami Brahmanandaji). Swamiji was at Ottapalam in the house of a devotee and disciple of Sri Maharaj when the latter attained Mahasamadhi. The moment Swamiji read the telegram conveying the sad news he burst into tears and expressed that he had then lost all interest in life. He wished to retire. “But” said he “it was his wish that I myself should complete the Trivandrum work and I must do it. His least wish is a command to me”. That seems to have been the main-spring of all his subsequent activities there.

The night of the 24th passed. Till morn on the 25th Swamiji was his old self — a stupendous personality, a great master, alert, active, teaching, testing and directing his disciples. From now onwards, he was the embodiment of Peace and Bliss. He

hardly spoke anything. True to his words he took neither medicine nor food except a few drops of soda-water or orange-juice which the disciples lovingly pressed him to take. When once a few drops of Pano-pepton were mixed with soda-water, Swamiji reprimanded the attendant. He was physically very weak and lay absorbed in contemplation. Dr. Tampi (with Mrs. Tampi) arrived by 10 P. M. on Monday and examined Swamiji. As there was nothing to be done immediately, Doctor said he would examine him again the next morning. "That is sufficient" said Swamiji.

The night passed very quietly. At 4 A. M. one of the attending disciples went to his side and said "Swamiji, soda". Swamiji then asked quite audibly "what is the time"? 4 A. M. the disciple replied. Swamiji again became silent. Ekadasi—Harivasara—had begun. At day-break, the children had their bath as usual, assembled by his side and began Bhajana and Keerthana. Doctor Tampi came and examined Swamiji. The worst fears were

then almost confirmed. At about 7 A. M. Swamiji was seen attempting to get up. One of the disciples slowly raised him and kept him resting on the disciple's breast. Then in low tones Swamiji said, "Yes-yes—yes—that's alright"—the last words that came out of that mouth from which had flashed forth Divine messages and commands in those thundering tones. After a while he again lay on his bed, a deep calm and holy peace settling on his benign countenance. Bhajana continued. Ganges water and Theertham were administered. The children sang:—

Nirmalam hridayam yasya
 Gurorâjnânuvarthinah
 Nirmalanandapâdâya
 Tasmai Sri Gurave namah.

The last words of the chant went forth: to greet them, as it were, went out the very last and supremely peaceful breath of the Beloved Master.

Then in solemn ~~yet~~^{and} anguished tones, from the host of disciples and devotees assembled arose the spontaneous cry:

Jai Sri Gurumaharaj ki jai
 Jai Sri Swamiji maharaj ki jai.

The heart-rending news of the Mahasamadhī soon spread and devotees poured in from all quarters. By about noon, the Ashrama was packed with mourners. The doctor who had been attending on Swamiji and Doctor Tampi again examined the body and declared that rigor mortis had set in. Preparation for the cremation then began. At about 3 P. M.—Ekadasi being over—the body was bathed, dressed in silk and profusely garlanded with flowers. Arati was performed, and all the disciples and devotees—men, women and children—offered worship and fell prostrate at the Holy feet. In the meanwhile, a funeral pyre had been constructed with Sandalwood and other appropriate materials on the banks of the holy Bharata river. Thither the body was taken by Dr. Tampi and other devotees and disciples in procession headed by a Bhajana party including Swamiji's children. The pyre was duly lit and the fire blazed forth verily like the spirit which had inhabited the body, glowing pure and free. By sunset, the fire died out leaving the host of devotees plunged in grief and gloom.

On the 7th day (the 2nd of May) the disciples and devotees gathered the sacred remains and deposited them in the Ashrama after due and proper ceremonies. Special pooja was offered on the 11th day when about 2,000 Daridra Narayanas were sumptuously fed.

It is the earnest desire of the disciples to erect a tomb over the sacred spot of cremation and a special shrine in the Ashrama itself to instal the Holy remains of the illustrious son of Sri Rama Krishna and the Guru and spiritual guide of thousands of souls in India and abroad.

Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.

